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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRASILIA 001140

SIPDIS

WHA FOR A/S SHANNON, DAS MCMULLEN, INL, AND AND BSC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/14/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [BR](#) [BO](#)

SUBJECT: KEEPING LIT BRAZIL AND BOLIVIA'S FLICKERING
INTEREST IN TRILATERAL COUNTERNARCOTICS COOPERATION WITH
THE U.S.

REF: A. BRASILIA 01041

[1](#)B. STATE 094673

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Lisa Kubiske, reason: 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Brazilian Foreign Ministry (Itamaraty) officials raised Bolivia,s nascent interest in trilateral counternarcotics cooperation with the United States and Brazil during a late August meeting with U.S. officials. In follow-up discussions with PolOffs, Itamaraty,s Head of the Department for South American Affairs Amb. Joao Luiz Pereira Pinto clarified that they have yet to give much thought to the opportunity and that any engagement on this front is unlikely before Bolivia,s December presidential elections. Pereira Pinto said that the initial interest in trilateral cooperation was raised by Choquehuanca, but the Brazilians have continued to raise it during subsequent meetings with the Bolivians to keep the issue on the table. The overture from Itamaraty represents a significant departure from previous signals regarding cooperation on regional counterdrug initiatives. Mission recommends engaging Itamaraty prior to the Bolivian elections to explore concrete ideas on how to work with Bolivia. END SUMMARY.

ITAMARATY HIGHLIGHTS OPENING FOR CN COOPERATION WITH BOLIVIA

[1](#)2. (C) During a lunch the Charge hosted for WHA DAS Chris McMullen on August 25 with seven senior Itamaraty officials, Brazil,s Under Secretary for Latin America Ambassador Enio Cordeiro said Brazilian FM Celso Amorim spoke with Bolivian FM David Choquehuanca in late August the possibility of joint cooperation between their countries and the United States on counternarcotics issues. Cordeiro suggested that the Bolivians are waiting for a signal from the United States to increase cooperation (REF A). Cordeiro commented that the Bolivians had made it clear that counternarcotics cooperation with the United States could not continue "as it was in the past" and had to respect Bolivia,s sovereignty. (Comment: Although Cordeiro did not say explicitly that the Bolivians would reject a DEA presence, other Brazilian officials have told us that they understand from the Bolivians they are not willing to reestablish a connection with DEA at this time. End Comment.)

BOLIVIA MISSION IN THE DARK

[1](#)3. (C) PolOffs met with the Bolivian Embassy,s Charge Maria

Cristiane Linale on 8 September. She was unaware of the discussions, but did not discount the possibility. (Note: As a career diplomat, she explained, she is not in her government,s confidence on many issues. End note.). Linale believes that at the moment no major initiatives, let alone counternarcotics cooperation with the United States, are likely to gain traction in Bolivia, which will be "paralyzed" until the December elections pass. Linale opined that the viability of greater trilateral counternarcotics cooperation will depend in part on whether the new representation in Congress is balanced or biased toward Morales and cocaleros. Linale also stressed that Brazilian President Lula will have to play a role in pushing counternarcotics cooperation, which Brazilian officials have made clear to her is an important issue for Brazil as well because of the need to stem the flow of drugs entering Brazil through Bolivia, if it is to be taken on seriously in Bolivia.

TRILATERAL COOPERATION STILL JUST A THOUGHT FOR ITAMARATY

14. (C) Pereira Pinto, who also handles relations with Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay, explained to PolOffs in a meeting on September 8 that Choquehuanca first raised the idea of cooperation with Brazil and the United States on counternarcotics some time ago. Itamaraty officials have since raised the idea of counternarcotics cooperation in a number of meetings with Bolivian officials, only to be told that it was not the right time to discuss it, which Pereira Pinto attributed to the upcoming election. He said Brazil understands the need to wait, but will continue to raise the issue so that it is not forgotten.

15. (C) Pereira Pinto said that after Bolivia expelled DEA it turned to Brazil as the "rich neighbor," assuming that Brasilia would fill the vacuum left and provide large-scale

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funding. Bolivia asked the Brazilians for everything DEA had previously provided. Pereira Pinto said Brazil is trying to be helpful, citing the GOB,s response to Bolivia,s request for helicopters to patrol borders as one example, but added that, even if Brazil wanted to take on such a role, Brazilian law only allows for a diplomatic presence abroad and Brazilian police on foreign soil can only attend to office work and cannot operate on the ground.

16. (C) When asked for ideas on how to move forward in establishing trilateral cooperation between Bolivia, Brazil, and the United States, Pereira Pinto promised to get back to PolOffs after "doing some homework" on what Brazil sees as the priorities and openings to begin such cooperation. Pereira Pinto compared working with the Bolivians to dealing with difficult poker players, claiming you never know what they are thinking about when they make requests. Decision-making in Bolivia takes a very long time because the government must always reach a consensus and the interlocutors are frequently changing, he said, leaving no institutional memory. When asked if increased assistance in border patrolling would be one way ease into trilateral counternarcotics cooperation, Pereira Pinto confirmed that there is a strong interest on Bolivia,s part to increase its presence along the borders and strengthen joint patrolling with Brazil. Pereira Pinto warned, however, that when the Brazilian Federal Police (DPF) has tried to train Bolivian police the candidates sent by the Bolivians have often been unprepared and incapable of completing the training. Pereira Pinto assured PolOffs that any attempt to establish trilateral counternarcotics cooperation with Bolivia will not negatively impact DEA,s mission in Brazil and current work related to Bolivia conducted from Brazil; Brazil is a sovereign country and will not allow Bolivia to influence its decision to work with DEA, he said.

COMMENT: A SHIFT MOTIVATED BY NECESSITY

¶7. (C) Brazil,s new interest in facilitating trilateral counternarcotics cooperation with the United States and Bolivia is driven by a combination of factors: concern over its own increasing drug problems, its inability to replace DEA,s presence and work in Bolivia, the difficulty of working with Bolivia on the ground, and its recognition that nascent regional efforts to deal with the problem may take years to yield results. Brazil has long been a trafficking route for Andean cocaine and is now the second largest market for cocaine in the world, according to the UN. According to DEA Brazil sources, the working relationship between Bolivia and Brazil has proven difficult and the Federal Police (DPF), which currently has only two DPF agents in Bolivia, knows it needs help dealing with its drug problem.

¶8. (C) Despite longstanding excellent relations between USG law enforcement agencies and the DPF, Itamaraty has been generally resistant to law enforcement cooperation, and almost succeeded in preventing the relocation of DEA agents from Bolivia to Brazil. So this latest overture from Itamaraty represents a significant about-face. Although some Itamaraty officials will likely continue to be suspicious of our law enforcement presence, the high-level with which this was raised with us by Itamaraty should help minimize resistance elsewhere. Mission recommends that, in advance of the December elections in Bolivia, we engage Itamaraty on possibilities for concrete counterdrug cooperation, preferably on issues within the domain of the foreign relations ministries so as not to jeopardize ongoing cooperation between DEA and the DPF related to Bolivia counterdrug matters. Our ability to make progress on counternarcotics issues with Bolivia in the near future will also depend on Bolivia,s reaction to the release of the Majors List (REF B.)
KUBISKE